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CARTER, Jimmy

Carter Says SALT Would Help Promote More Peaceful World, National Security

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WASHINGTON—President Carter, trying to build support for a new strategic arms limitation treaty with the Soviet Union, said the pact "will contribute to a more peaceful world and to our own national security."

Mr. Carter used a speech to a New York meeting of the American Newspaper Publishers Association to set these themes of a more stable and enhanced U.S. security as the focal points of a major administration drive to win approval of the emerging SALT II agreement.

There already is substantial opposition to the treaty in the Senate, which must ratify the pact by a two-thirds vote. Carter administration and Capitol Hill officials believe the credibility and forcefulness of the President's appeal for the treaty will be a crucial element in winning approval.

Mr. Carter has delayed a major SALT address for months, as U.S. and Soviet negotiators have struggled to wrap up the final details of the agreement slowing the buildup of nuclear arsenals. But, apparently confident of reaching an agreement soon, Mr. Carter used yesterday's address to give his first comprehensive defense of the treaty.

Broad Public Support

The speech is designed to reinforce the broad public support for arms control, while countering a growing feeling—confirmed by pollsters—that the U.S. isn't keeping up with the Soviets' military strength.

"In our relations with the Soviet Union, the possibility of mutual annihilation makes a strategy of peace the only rational choice for both sides," Mr. Carter said. America is "the strongest nation on earth—politically, economically and militarily," the President asserted. The new treaty "will help to maintain our relative strength compared to the Soviets, and will avert a costly, risky and pointless buildup of missile launchers and bombers—at the end of which both sides would be even less secure."

He went out of his way to counter congressional concern that the U.S. won't be able to verify Soviet compliance with the agreement. The pact would limit both sides through 1985 to a total long-range nuclear force of 2,250 missiles and bombers. This is about 250 less than the Soviets currently have but more than the U.S. force. The accord also would slow the modernization of these forces.

Despite the recent loss of intelligence outposts of Iran, Mr. Carter said, "We are confident that no significant violation of the treaty could take place without the United States detecting it." This is because of the nation's "effective and sophisticated intelligence collection systems," such as satellites with cameras and other sensors, designed to monitor construction and test activity associated with Soviet strategic weapons, the President asserted.

In fact, Mr. Carter said, a SALT agreement makes intelligence collection easier.

because it bans deliberate concealment to impede verification of the agreement. "Any such concealment activity would itself be detectable," alerting the U.S. to a violation "so serious as to give us grounds to cancel the treaty itself," Mr. Carter asserted.

The Commander-in-Chief addressed another concern of both Congress and the military—the increasing vulnerability to Soviet attack of the 1,054 U.S. land-based ballistic missiles, about 70% of the U.S. nuclear forces. "This is a serious problem," Mr. Carter conceded. "We must deal with it sensibly and effectively," he said, but he didn't say which of several possible solutions he will adopt.

No Applause

Rather than discuss details before the generally passive publishers, who didn't applaud at all during the speech, Mr. Carter stressed his theme that the treaty will reduce tensions and increase world stability. Senate rejection of the treaty "would mean a radical turning away from America's long-time policy of seeking world peace, the control of nuclear weapons and the easing of tensions" between Washington and Moscow, he said.

The President took indirect note of the differences over SALT within the Soviet leadership by saying that "the most intransigent and hostile elements of the Soviet power structure would be encouraged and strengthened by a rejection of SALT. The Soviets might well feel that they have little to lose by creating new international tensions."

Rejection also would hinder other arms-control efforts, including those designed to control the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that haven't developed them yet, and would cause allies to doubt U.S. ability "to manage successfully a stable East-West relationship," he stated.

With or without SALT, the U.S. and the Soviet Union will continue to compete for military advantage and world-wide influence, Mr. Carter said. "The issue is whether we will move ahead with strategic arms control or resume a relentless arms competition. That is the choice we face—between an imperfect world with SALT II and an imperfect, and more dangerous, world without it."